In order to gather together in a common place, in addition to the tracks they leave they twist branches and handsful of grass at crossroads in order that their companions may know where to find them, they having prearranged the meaning of the signs.

[193] Another means of communication is by making fires. During our traveling about the Chaco we were continually surrounded by fires, either at close quarters or far away, fires which sometimes took on the proportions of colossal blazes. And often, when we thought that we were in absolute solitude, it would happen that upon approaching an Indian village we would be informed that we were expected, and we would hear tell of the order which had been observed in our march.

They make use, moreover, of many spies and informers. In Mataco the former are called niguaiecque, and the latter gu'éicáss.

They apparently do have some sort of tactical organization: thus they have a general chief, subordinate chief and petty chieftains. The first is called, in Mataco, canniat tizán, the second, canniat, and as for the last, I have forgotten.

The general chiefs are chosen at second remove, that is, from among the subordinate chiefs, who, in turn, are elected by the people. Normally a marked preference is shown for the late chief's sons, provided they be of age, courageous and good. But then, of course, we must say that in these elections the same passions are present which appear amongst us in our elections.

They also have another category of persons, whom they call nyát and corresponds vaguely to the Spanish "caballero" or the "galantuomo" of southern Italy. So it is that they refer to any white persons whom they consider of quality with the name nyát. It is to be supposed that a like distinction is made among the other Indians. In Peru and wherever the Quechua language is spoken, gentlemen are called Viracocha.

Once the general chief has been elected the subordinate elector chiefs go to call on him when they can, which visits are celebrated with the accustomed drinking and eating orgies. A general chieftainship almost always embraces villages far removed from each other.

The Matacos call those who visit them tzicki-ác.

The authorities among the Chaco Indians play an almost purely military role. In peace time they lose practically all their prestige,

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gesticulations, must be a whole sentence. Even though a great deal of time has elapsed I think I can still explain them and not fall into error as I do so.

"One" is hoté-cuuaj 'hi, and one finger is raised. One can also say hoteji and hotecoaji. Now hoté means "as," cuuáj means "finger," and hi (nasal h) is a particle which indicates possession, container etc. so, not worrying too much about this small elemental difference which is so common in every language, and especially in this one which undergoes so many shifts, we may say that the translation of hotécuaji is: "as finger has" ("this which I show").

"Two" is hoté quuasi, and two fingers are raised. Quuas is the plural, so to speak, of cuoaj according to this tongue, and thus the translation of the above is "as fingers has."

"Three" is laj tdi qua yél, and three fingers are raised, the little finger remaining folded and covered by the left hand. Now laj means "without" or "no"; el means "other"; quai is too similar to quoají to allow for doubt, and so we may say that the translation is "without the other finger." The same may be said for lája echecuoya -- "widower without a husband" [sic].

"Four" is tdi qualéss híquí and I don't know how to go about translating it literally and so shall not try. However one can perceive that in qualéss there is a plural iqui form, which is a word that often accompanies hi, and which [258] is to be found in phrases in which we have the idea of "to be" expressed, with other analogous ones -- it is therefore probable that it refers to the gestures which go with each numeral.

These gestures were not made only by that chief but also by other Indians of the central Chaco and by Faustino who could count as well as any of us. There must be some relation between the gestures and the words. The etymologies which I offer, in my opinion, explain the case more satisfactorily than those which are usually given in analogous philological problems.

However, one must not judge the worth and elegance of the original by the literal translations. Where would the elegance of most compound words be if we translated their Greek originals directly? For example; "Panorama" -- "all seen....!!"

And as far as the intellectual value of this manner of expressing numerals is concerned, is its genesis not quite natural? The Guaraní